

LEAN INITIATIVE ENHANCES COMPETITIVENESS IN THE BUILDING PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

ABOUT FIRESTONE BUILDING PRODUCTS. For over one hundred years, Firestone Building Products has been a world-recognized leader in the manufacture of a full building envelope of roofing, wall, and specialty products. The company is a subsidiary of Bridgestone Americas (BSAM, a subsidiary of Bridgestone Corporation), and is environmentally committed to quality manufacturing. Headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, Firestone has 12 manufacturing facilities and three distribution/warehouse facilities in the United States. In 2006, Firestone established a location in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The Alabama facility now has over 250,000 square feet of manufacturing work space, and approximately 90 employees.

THE CHALLENGE. Ten years after establishing the Alabama facility, Firestone was facing increased competition and price pressure within the building products industry. The company recognized that in order to grow and remain competitive, it needed to strengthen its continuous improvement programs. Firestone hired a director of Continuous Improvement with a mandate to establish a consistent Lean training and production system across the corporation.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The new director of continuous improvement had previous success working with the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), part of the MEP National Network™, and decided to reach out to ATN for assistance in establishing a lean initiative at Firestone. ATN performed a series of Lean 101 training courses for the company using the long-established Buzz Electronics training simulation. The initiative included the development and execution of individualized lean training programs for the COO, corporate director of manufacturing, and other company executives. Over one hundred corporate leaders—including executives, plant managers, supervisors, and engineers—participated in the training and accepted the challenge to lead the Lean initiative into the future. The investment in lean paid off in cost savings and cost avoidance opportunities, and Firestone is retaining jobs and remaining competitive in the industry.

"Firestone Building Products is very pleased with the results of the ATN services and the connection made with our teammates."

-Russell Williams, Corporate Continuous Improvement Director

RESULTS



Obtained **\$800,000** in cost savings; \$420,000 in cost avoidance



Provided lean training for over **100** corporate leaders



Invested **\$250,000** in workforce improvements



Added/retained **5** jobs

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